

US Transportation Secretary LaHood Meets with Reps from Rural States



MDT Director Jim Lynch speaks before U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood about rural America's transportation needs. Seated left to right are: North Dakota Transportation Director Francis Ziegler, South Dakota Secretary Darin Bergquist, and Wyoming Transportation Director Jon Cox.

MDT Director Jim Lynch, along with South Dakota Secretary Darin Bergquist and Directors Francis Ziegler, North Dakota and John Cox, Wyoming, delivered statements before U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood concerning the needs of rural states. The panel discussion took place at a

Surface Transportation Reauthorization Outreach meeting held in Bismarck, North Dakota, in June.

The meeting was one of six held across the country by U.S. Department of Transportation to help shape policy for surface transportation programs ahead of the next federal transportation funding bill, and the only session held in a rural part of the country. The meeting provided a forum for Secretary LaHood and several of his top ranking staff to learn about rural transportation issues. Director Lynch and his counterparts had the opportunity to discuss the importance to the country of a strong federal investment in transportation for rural states.

The focus of Director Lynch's testimony was on the importance of rural transportation for connectivity and the economic vitality of the country. "The U.S. transportation system isn't just about moving commuters and containers," Lynch stated. "It's also about moving cows and commodities, and connecting our communities—sometimes over long distances." Director Lynch went on to state that federal-aid roads beyond the National Highway System (NHS) are essential to agriculture and resource industries. The smaller systems that feed into the Interstate and NHS must be maintained to provide connectivity to other modes and markets. He said, "Agriculture is Montana's largest industry, generating more than \$2.4 billion annually." He also spoke briefly on tourism, aging infrastructure, and safety.

(Continued on next page)



Surface Transportation Program Reauthorization

The federal surface transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU) expired September 30, 2009. Since then, states have been operating under short-term program extensions provided through Congress. The current extension carries the federal transportation program through December 31, 2010. For the federal program to continue beyond December, Congress must pass either a long-term bill or another program extension. A long-term bill anytime soon is unlikely as no formal legislation has been proposed, and the draft bills circulating in Congressional committees haven't addressed how to fund the program. Funding aside, the drafts that have circulated aren't good for Montana or other rural states. For instance, the draft program proposed by Congressman James Oberstar from Minnesota includes a number of provisions that are detrimental to rural state programs and adds considerable funding for new programs targeted at the nation's population centers. Under this draft bill, Montana and other rural states would not be eligible to participate in \$75 billion in new programs over the next six years, which target metropolitan areas with populations of 500,000 or greater and large projects of national significance. With a total six-year increase in the draft legislation of \$110 billion, specifically exempting rural states from nearly 70 percent of those funds is a clear indication that rural transportation needs are not being considered. Fortunately, Senator Baucus is a senior member of the committee responsible for writing the nation's highway bill. MDT will continue to work hard and support our Congressional delegation in ensuring Montana's interests are protected.

(LaHood continued from previous page)

All presenters stressed the importance of protecting and adequately funding programs for transportation investment in rural states, proportional growth in the highway and transit programs, and continued flexibility for states, not the federal government, to identify transportation needs and select projects within their states.

Additional testimony was provided by tribal officials from four states; business and industry representatives; transit operators; and city, county, and township officials. The overall message was well received, with one USDOT representative commenting the information was “an eye opener,” as their focus on transportation is often only related to moving people in urban areas.

Secretary LaHood provided a short statement on the complexity of reauthorization and thanked those who participated in the meeting.

MDT Provides Cell Phone Pull-outs



MDT is posting signs on turnouts with cell phone coverage.

way turnouts where cell phone service is available.

The signs currently in place are in western Montana and will be expanded across the state. A total of 18 turnouts are signed on US-2 east of Kalispell, MT-83, US-93 between Polson and Kalispell, US-93 south of Missoula, and MT-200 east of Lincoln. The signs read, “Cell phone pull out ¼ mile.”

Posting signs at the turnouts comes at little cost and has a big potential for reducing crashes and saving lives. The turnouts already exist—MDT crews just need to verify cell coverage, make the signs, and install them.

Using cell phones and texting now are a way of life. Making a habit of not using them while driving should be a way of life also.

If you have a favorite highway turnout location with cell coverage and you would like a sign installed, contact Duane Williams at duwilliams@mt.gov or by phone at 444-7312.

Watch for Montana's Passenger Rail Service Update



The Passenger Rail Service chapter of the 2010 Rail Plan has been significantly updated from the draft published in 2009 and is the final piece of MDT's update to the Montana Rail Plan. This section includes an analysis of passenger rail service along a southern route in Montana, reflecting new information from technical documents prepared for Montana by Amtrak.

The entire rail plan update is available on MDT's Web site. Comments on other sections of the draft rail plan have been completed, but “Chapter 4 - Passenger Rail Service” will soon be available for public review and comment at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolv/railplan/>. Please use the link to the comment section on the Web site to give your input on this chapter.

Completion of this segment of the rail plan finalizes an effort to update the rail plan to provide current rail system information, while also looking at recent state and federal rail planning requirements.

Major elements of the rail plan include:

- Montana rail competition
- Intermodal service
- State freight trends
- Coal transport
- Passenger rail service – Amtrak Empire Builder route
- Analysis of passenger rail along the southern route
- Lines at risk for abandonment
- Grain facility consolidation impact analysis

For additional information on the rail plan, contact MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division at 444-3423, or visit our Web site at www.mdt.mt.gov.

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The Newsline is available electronically for your convenience. If you wish to receive it electronically, simply send your e-mail address to Newsline Editor Sandra Waddell at swaddell@mt.gov, phone her at 444-7614, or drop a note to her attention at PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001.

All other changes such as address updates and name changes are also welcome any time.

Emergency Medical Services Grant Program Enters Second Round of Funding



MDT Director Jim Lynch announced that applications are available for the second installment of MDT's Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Provider Grant Program. Submittal deadline is September 17, 2010. All licensed EMS providers in Montana have received notification of the grant deadline and application availability.

Applications are available on MDT's

Web site at www.mdt.mt.gov. Applicants can submit their information electronically, or mail a paper copy to the MDT Rail, Transit and Planning Division.

Many emergency medical service providers in Montana have difficulty making ends meet due to economic and demographic circumstances. The purpose of this program is to provide competitive grants to emergency medical service providers for

acquiring or leasing ambulances or emergency response vehicles, training, communication equipment, and medical care equipment. Emergency medical service providers are eligible for this program if they meet the following criteria:

- They have been in operation at least 12 months.
- They bill for services at a level that is at least equivalent to Medicare billing.
- The majority of active emergency medical technicians are volunteers.

The first round of grant funding for state fiscal year 2010 has been awarded and items distributed to grantees. Over half of the applicants received full funding for all eligible items requested, which included eight ambulances, nine cots, one extraction spreader (jaws of life), five training manikins, and other life saving equipment.

For a hard copy of the application or more information, contact MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division at 444-3423, or visit our Web site at www.mdt.mt.gov.

Transit Tales

Transit Facility Construction is in Full Swing

Transit facility construction using Montana's Federal Transit American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds is in full swing. MDT is helping five agencies build new facilities. Seven others have completed design and are close to selecting prime contractors for their projects. Following is a status report:

- **Hamilton** – The Bitterroot Bus facility heater was the first ARRA transit project completed in Montana.
- **Kalispell** – Eagle Transit built a \$900,000 facility, which was completed in August. The Kalispell facility allows for increased vehicle storage and a wash bay, along with a vehicle hoist in another on-site building.
- **Helena** – All the walls are erected for a new transit facility as work begins to move inside. The \$3 million structure includes several "green" features. It will be a full-service facility housing transit staff and vehicles.
- **Butte** – Builders recently broke ground for a \$500,000 vehicle storage garage. Butte also has funding to restore the driveway at the Harrison Street/Civic Center transfer center.
- **Bozeman** – The walls have been erected on the Galavan facility, and the inside work has begun. The \$1.2 million project will include offices, storage, and maintenance space.
- **Chester** – The Liberty County Transit facility broke ground recently. Chester is using \$350,000 to build bus storage and an office.
- **Sidney** – Richland County Transportation selected a prime contractor to build two bus ports at a cost of \$195,000.
- **West Yellowstone** – West Yellowstone Foundation has completed design for construction of a one-stall garage.
- **Browning** – Blackfeet Transit will be upgrading its existing facility at a cost of \$117,000 with a design/build contract.
- **Pablo** – CS&KT Transit will spend \$196,000 to put in an underground fuel storage tank and construct passenger shelters.
- **Big Sky** – Skyline is erecting six passenger shelters with \$52,800.
- **Shelby** – Northern Transit Interlocal and Toole County Transit has \$500,000 to renovate a building to create office space and house vehicles.
- **Broadus** – Powder River Transportation is in the process of selecting a prime contractor and will spend \$300,000 to construct a bus storage facility.



Eagle Transit facility in Kalispell was completed in August.

Safe Routes to School Program Awards Funds

Montana's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program awarded over \$1.8 million to 22 communities and schools in Montana for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects for fiscal year 2011.

Infrastructure projects consist mostly of new sidewalk installations making travel to and from school safer, easier, and cleaner for biking and walking. A few new bike rack pads will be installed as well.

Non-infrastructure projects will support a range of activities such as walking school buses, bike trains, year-long bike/ped programs, teacher bike/ped curriculum training, and bike rodeos.

In the photographs below, Montana teachers and community members are introduced to the "Journeys from Home" (JFH) pedestrian/ bicycle safety training curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade. This training was held at UM-Western in

Dillon on July 26 and 27. Several communities applied for and received the curriculum training for fiscal year 2011. JFH is a Bitterroot non-profit organization with the mission of perpetuating the Montana Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety curriculum within Montana schools.

This is the fifth and last year of the initial SRTS mandate from Congress. The Montana SRTS implementation team made every effort to allocate all available funds to this year's applicants.

With continued funding, Montana SRTS will again accept applications no later than December 31, 2010. The application is available at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubininvolve/saferoutes/>. Anyone interested in SRTS should contact Montana's SRTS coordinator, Taylor Lonsdale of the Western Transportation Institute, at taylor.lonsdale@coe.montana.edu or by phone at 994-7031.



Montana teachers and community members are introduced to the "Journey from Home" pedestrian/bicycle safety training curriculum.

International Walk to School Day

International Walk to School day is Wednesday, October 6, and people everywhere will be taking part. Parents, teachers, and community members can promote walking school buses (students walking in the formation of a bus) and bike trains as good, healthy activities that can create a sense of community. If you live too far from school for walking or biking the entire distance, find a safe and comfortable drop-off point and finish the commute on foot. Learning safe walking and biking habits, stopping to look at all road crossings, and patiently following the guidance of crossing guards will increase the students' awareness of their surroundings and boost their self-confidence and street smarts.

Find a way to help reduce traffic congestion around your school this fall. Talk to school staff, the local parent/teacher group, and neighbors about ways to make walking and biking

acceptable and safe. If your family already walks or bikes to school, then offer to mentor other families that may need a bit more encouragement.

For other ideas, contact the Montana Safe Routes to School coordinator (contact information is located at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubininvolve/saferoutes/>). Schools can register for International Walk to School day at <http://www.walktoschool.org/register/index.cfm>. You can see what other Montana schools are planning for Walk to School day at <http://www.walktoschool.org/who/seestate.cfm?st=MT>.



Do Your Part to Prevent Storm Water Pollution



Storm water runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. This water is not piped to a treatment facility like wastewater. Storm water can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants, which also flow into the storm drain system and discharge, untreated, to nearby waterways. These pollutants can harm the waterways, discouraging recreational use, contaminating drinking water supplies, and interfering with the habitat for fish, other aquatic organisms, and wildlife.

Here are some simple tips you can use to protect and improve water quality in your area:

- Never throw trash or litter on the ground or out the window of a car or truck. Set an example for others by not littering, and always carry a litter bag in your car.
- Fertilize established lawns with phosphorous-free fertilizer and don't overspray fertilizer into the street. Use the appropriate amount of water on your lawn.
- Use dry methods to clean your driveways and sidewalks.
- Rake leaves and sweep grass clippings away from curbs.
- When washing your car or truck at home, direct water onto your lawn to soak up soap. Consider using a commercial car wash. They use less water than hand washing, and the wastewater generated is treated rather than discharged to the storm water system.
- Properly dispose of items such as paint, used oil, and other chemicals. Never dump these materials down a storm drain or in an area where they can enter the storm system.
- Repair or replace leaky trash cans or dumpsters.
- Direct your home's gutters onto your lawn. This way you'll save on your water bill while preventing storm water impacts.
- Clean up after your pets. Pet waste left on the ground can wash into the storm water system when it rains and contribute harmful bacteria, parasites and viruses to waterways.

If you'd like more information on the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program or water quality protection in general, please check out the following Web site: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolv/stormwater/>. This link also provides access to a short storm water survey, the Illicit Discharge and Detection Elimination (IDDE) waste water brochure, MDT Storm Water, DEQ MS4, and EPA Small Management System Review Web sites.

Yellowstone Airport Happenings



World War II T-6 Texan flown by Sean Bagley of the Legacy Flight Museum.

As the 2010 summer season kicked off, there was much activity surrounding the Yellowstone airport including the opening of the Smoke Jumper Café and the installment of enhanced taxiway markings.

The Smoke Jumper Café opened in early June and can be checked out on either www.airnav.com or on the airport's new Web page www.yellowstoneairport.org.

Enhanced taxiway markings are part of the Federal Aviation Administration's safety objectives to reduce the risks of aircraft incursions on movement areas. The enhancements at Yellowstone Airport include enhanced taxiway centerline markings and hold position markings at every entrance to runway 1-19. The markings are to help guide pilots and increase pilot awareness especially in non-optimal weather conditions.

June 22 marked the 75th anniversary of air service to the community of West Yellowstone. In commemoration, the Yellowstone Historic Center's Wings Into the West exhibit was opened June 11 in downtown West Yellowstone at the museum located in the historic Union Pacific Depot. The following day, the airport, in collaboration with Yellowstone Aviation, put on a successful fly-in and open house. Aviation enthusiasts enjoyed grilled food, a display of interesting planes, and a three-man air show.

A special thanks is in order to Everett Wierda from Manhattan, Bob and Linda Marshall from Belgrade, and Sean Bagley from the Legacy Flight Museum Rexburg, Idaho for bringing their vintage aircraft and putting on the great air show, which consisted of two World War II T-6 Texans and a BT-13 flying formation over the airport. If you are in the area, the museum's exhibit on aviation is extensive and well worth the trip.



West Yellowstone airport.

CTEP Spotlight

Sanders County High Bridge

It was a long time coming—more than ten years—but residents of Sanders County and Thompson Falls were rewarded for their patience and hard work with the grand opening of the reconstructed “High Bridge” over the Clark Fork River early this summer. The conversion of the 588-foot-long vehicle bridge to a bicycle and pedestrian facility provides a convenient connection to the south side of the river and adds a vital link to the bicycle and pedestrian trail system throughout the Thompson Falls area.

Owned and maintained by the county, the bridge is one of two steel truss bridges erected in 1911 over the Clark Fork River downstream from the PPL hydroelectric dam in Thompson Falls. Until the early 1970s, the single-lane, timber deck bridge was used as a vehicle crossing. Advanced deterioration of the wooden deck, railing, and southerly timber spans made the bridge unsafe and forced its closure. In the late 1990s, the county began the effort to revive the ailing structure for use as a bicycle-pedestrian crossing.

Rehabilitation included repairing the steel truss structure, replacing 7,130 square feet of wood bridge decking and 1,190 lineal feet of bridge rail. State, federal, and private sources funded nearly \$700,000 for design and construction, including some \$450,000 in CTEP funds that the county had accumulated through the years.

Morrison-Maierle, Inc. of Helena provided the project design and construction management and Wesslen Construction, Inc. of Spokane was the contractor.



High Bridge before rehabilitation.



High Bridge after rehabilitation.

CTEP is the Community Transportation Enhancement Program. For more information, contact Mike Wherley at 444-4221 or mwherley@mt.gov.

Research Corner

2010 Summer Transportation Institute Program

The Summer Transportation Institute (STI) is an annual program held through the Western Transportation Institute (WTI) at Montana State University (MSU). The program is intended to spark interest in transportation careers; aid in the development of the next generation of engineers, scientists, planners, and designers; and address the nation's need for a diverse pool of transportation professionals. Tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students from a mix of backgrounds and hometowns are recruited.

A grant from the Federal Highway Administration, in-kind and cash contributions from MDT, MSU, WTI, and private and non-profit sponsors cover program expenses. Students pay for their own travel to and from MSU; however, some travel grants are awarded on a needs basis.

Students live on campus while learning about career opportunities in transportation. The two-week program provides a multi-disciplinary academic curriculum, which includes guest speaker presentations, hands-on laboratories, and field trips.

Fifteen students participated in the 2010 program at MSU from June 13 - 25. They learned about all modes of transportation and developed leadership skills while working on team design-build projects. Topics and activities included road ecology, urban planning, traffic engineering, geotechnical engineering, concrete mix designs, bridge design, team design and build competition, aviation, and traffic safety/human factors. Highlights included field trips to MDT headquarters in Helena, Gallatin Field airport, and two major road redesign projects in Billings. In addition, the participants learned about college preparation and career planning. During the evenings and weekend, STI students participated in educational, sport, and team-building activities.

More information about the STI program can be found at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/admin/summer.shtml>.

STI program and application information is available on WTI's Web site at <http://www.wti.montana.edu/education/summertransportationinstitute/>.

Wild West Rest Areas and Beyond

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian

Taking a break by the side of the road is as old as traveling itself. In the American West, rest areas consisted simply of wherever you stopped and got down off your horse. Sometimes it meant getting out of a stagecoach and stretching your legs for a bit at a stage station. With the arrival of the automobile in the early twentieth century, however, things became a little more complicated. You could still pull over and do what you needed to do and, for some, that meant throwing out a couple of sleeping bags and spending the night within a few yards of the highway. Local businesses encouraged motorists to stop in their communities and take advantage of the services they had to offer, but stops in rural areas were still left to the whims of the drivers and their passengers.

In the early 1930s, the Montana Highway Department developed roadside picnic areas where motorists could stop, take a break, and spend some quality time communing with Montana's great outdoors. The picnic areas were primitive, consisting only of a couple of picnic tables, a trash receptacle and, maybe, a historical marker. In 1934, the highway department took the concept one step further and built its first rest area. Located on North Main Street, then a part of US 91, in Helena across from Memorial Park, it included an information center, drinking fountain, picnic tables, and a circular stone parking structure. The rest area was located amid a beautifully landscaped strip park that was originally intended to screen the city dump from the highway. This was the only rest area of its kind in Montana during the Great Depression. While the highway department built other roadside beautification areas near urban areas in the state, the North Main site was the only one to include amenities for motorists. Through the 1940s and 1950s, the department continued to construct and maintain roadside parking areas, but none included any features intended to really give travelers a break.

In the late 1950s, that all began to change with the development of formal roadside safety rest areas (SRAs) that would be incorporated into the newly created Interstate highway system. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, which created the Interstate system, included provisions for the inclusion of SRAs into Interstate design. Three years later, in 1959, the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) published *A Policy on Safety Rest Areas for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways*. The AASHO guidelines called only for basic amenities at SRAs (bathrooms, picnic tables, trash receptacles, a drinking fountain, and, perhaps, a telephone booth) and the configuration of the sites. The federal government initially paid for the SRAs under the same formula that funded the Interstates and they would be built concurrently with road projects. This simple idea, however, took on a life of its own as visionaries saw beyond the basic AASHO guidelines and saw an "opportunity to reconnect people with the places they were traveling through" and provide an identifier for the state or region.

The highway department adopted the AASHO policy in 1961 and proposed to relocate the old roadside historical markers into the planned rest areas. The department had been building new rest areas along the state's primary two-lane roads. These sites consisted of prefabricated metal buildings that were efficient, but not very attractive. The federal government funded the acquisition of right-of-way for the SRAs and the construction of the

approach and exit lanes for them, but the state was responsible for the design and construction of the facilities. In November 1963, the Montana Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) submitted a proposal to the highway commissioners to custom design a minimum of two new rest areas that would employ "forms and materials truly indigenous to Montana." The Montana AIA's proposal followed a nationwide trend to create SRAs that were reflective of the environment and history of the areas where they were located. There would be no uniformity of design as was represented by the Interstate highways. Instead, the "design and materials fitting to our scenery would enhance the natural beauty of the scenery rather than stand out as obviously foreign elements of purely utility value only." The architects proposed individual designs that would use local and native materials, and that would "channel all dollars spent on these rest areas right back into the state economy." The highway commissioners vigorously supported the AIA's proposal, immediately appropriating funds to build 20 rest areas across the state, four in each of the five administrative districts. The Montana Chapter of the AIA functioned in an advisory capacity to the highway department.

In January 1964, Lumber Enterprises, Inc. of Bozeman submitted the first design for a Montana rest area along Little Prickly Pear Creek about midway through Wolf Creek Canyon on I-15. It was not until August 1965 that the highway department awarded a contract for the construction of the rest area, the first on Montana's Interstate system. The SRA cost nearly \$47,000 to build and included all of the amenities recommended by AASHO and the Montana AIA. The main building at the Lyon's Creek Rest Area was influenced by the spectacular canyon through which the Interstate passed. It certainly met the criteria established by the AIA as it presented "Montana to the tourist as the progressive state that it is." The rest area served the traveling public until 1992 when it was closed; it currently functions as a parking area. Other rest areas followed until 16 had been constructed by the time the Interstate highway system in the state had been completed in 1985.

Today, Interstate and primary highway rest areas remain an important part of Montana's transportation system. There are currently 52 rest areas in the state, including 19 on the Interstates. Many old rest areas have been closed as they were worn out and new ones opened to best serve motorists. Many of the older rest areas, like at Dearborn on I-15, are undergoing major renovations to make them more appealing and useful to today's needs. Like their predecessors, though, each Montana rest area is unique and provides motorists with a place to take a break, read an interpretive sign, and view the state's fantastic scenery.



Dena Mora rest area before.
(located approximately five miles from the Idaho border)



Dena Mora rest area after.
(located approximately five miles from the Idaho border)

MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.



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MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolv/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf, or give us a call at 1-800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to mdtnewprojects@mt.gov.

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